05 The Meeting of Nanda and Vasudeva

from the Krsna Book Chapter 5 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

(forest sounds, cheerful music)

Narrator: Although Krsna was the real son of Vasudeva and Devaki, because of Kamsa's atrocious activities Vasudeva could not enjoy the birth ceremony of his son. But, Nanda Maharaja, the foster father, celebrated the birth ceremony of Krsna very joyfully.

The next day, it was declared that a male child was born of Yasoda. According to Vedic custom, Nanda Maharaja called for learned astrologers and brahmanas to perform the birth ceremony. After the birth of a child, the astrologers calculate the moment of the birth and make a horoscope of the child's future life.

Another ceremony takes place after the birth of the child: the family members take baths and decorate themselves with ornaments and garlands; then they come before the child and the astrologer to hear of the future life of the child.

Nanda Maharaja and other members of the family dressed and sat down in front of the birthplace. All the brahmanas who were assembled there on this occasion chanted auspicious mantras, according to the rituals, while the astrologers performed the birth ceremony. All the demigods are also worshiped on this occasion, as well as the forefathers of the family.

Nanda Maharaja distributed 200,000 well decorated, dressed and ornamented cows to the brahmanas. He not only gave cows in charity, but hills of grains, decorated with golden-bordered garments and many ornaments.

In that ceremony, all the brahmanas assembled began to chant different kinds of Vedic mantras to invoke all good fortune for the child. There are different kinds of chanting known as suta, magadha, vandi and virudavali. Along with this chanting of mantras and songs, bugles and kettledrums sounded outside the house.

On this occasion, the joyous vibrations could be heard in all the pasturing grounds and all the houses. Within and outside of the houses there were varieties of artistic paintings, done with rice pulp, and scented water was sprinkled everywhere, even on the roads and streets. Ceilings

and roofs were decorated with different kinds of flags, festoons and green leaves. The gates were made of green leaves and flowers.

All the cows, bulls and calves were smeared with a mixture of oil and turmeric and painted with minerals like red oxide, yellow clay and manganese. They wore garlands of peacock feathers and were covered with nice colored dresses and gold necklaces.

When all the ecstatic cowherd men heard that Nanda Maharaja, father of Krsna, was celebrating the birth ceremony of his son, they became spontaneously joyful. They dressed themselves with very costly garments and ornamented their bodies with different kinds of earrings and necklaces and wore great turbans on their heads. After dressing themselves in this gorgeous way, they took various kinds of presentations and thus approached the house of Nanda Maharaja.

As soon as they heard that mother Yasoda had given birth to a child, all the cowherd women became overwhelmed with joy, and they also dressed themselves with various kinds of costly garments and ornaments and smeared scented cosmetics on their bodies.

As the dust on the lotus flower exhibits the exquisite beauty of the flower, all the gopis (cowherd girls) applied the dust of kunkuma on their lotus-like faces. These beautiful gopis took their different presentations and very soon reached the house of Maharaja Nanda.

Gopi: Dear child, You live long just to protect us!

Narrator: While they were blessing child Krsna in this way, they offered a mixture of turmeric powder with oil, yogurt, milk and water. They not only sprinkled this mixture on the body of child Krsna but on all other persons who were present there. Also on that auspicious occasion, there were different bands of expert musicians playing.

When the cowherd men saw the pastimes of the cowherd women, they became very joyful, and in response they also began to throw yogurt, milk, clarified butter and water upon the bodies of the gopis. Then, both parties began to throw butter on each other’s bodies.

Nanda Maharaja was also very happy to see the pastimes of the cowherd men and women, and he became very liberal in giving charity to the different singers who were assembled there. Some singers were reciting great verses from the Upanisads and Puranas, some were glorifying the family ancestors, and some were singing very sweet songs.

There were also many learned brahmanas present, and Nanda Maharaja, being very satisfied on this occasion, began to give them different kinds of garments, ornaments, and cows in charity.

Narrator: It is very important to note in this connection how wealthy the inhabitants of Vrndavana were simply by raising cows. All the cowherd men belonged to the vaisya community, and their business was to protect the

cows and cultivate crops. By their dress and ornaments and by their behavior, it appears that although they were in a small village, they still were rich in material possessions.

They possessed such an abundance of various kinds of milk products that they were throwing butter lavishly on each other's bodies without restriction. Their wealth was in milk, yogurt, clarified butter and many other milk products, and by trading their agricultural products, they were rich in various kinds of jewelry, ornaments and costly dresses. Not only did they possess all these things, but they could give them away in charity, as did Nanda Maharaja.

Thus, Nanda Maharaja, the foster father of Lord Krsna, began to satisfy the desires of all the men assembled there. He respectfully received them and gave them in charity whatever they desired. The learned brahmanas, who had no other source of income, were completely dependent on the vaisya and ksatriya communities for their maintenance, and they received gifts on such festive occasions as birthdays, marriages, etc.

While Nanda Maharaja was worshiping Lord Visnu on this occasion and was trying to satisfy all the people there, his only desire was that the newborn child Krsna would be happy. Nanda Maharaja had no knowledge that this child was the origin of Visnu, but he was praying to Lord Visnu to protect Him.

Rohinidevi, mother of Balarama, was the most fortunate wife of Vasudeva. She was away from her husband, yet just to congratulate Maharaja Nanda on the occasion of the birth ceremony of his son, Krsna, she dressed herself very nicely. Wearing a garland, a necklace and other bodily ornaments, she appeared on the scene and moved hither and thither. According to the Vedic system, a woman whose husband is not at home does not dress herself very nicely. But, although Rohini's husband was away, she still dressed herself on this occasion.

From the opulence of the birth ceremony of Krsna, it is very clear that at that time Vrndavana was rich in every respect. Because Lord Krsna took birth in the house of King Nanda and mother Yasoda, the goddess of fortune was obliged to manifest her opulences in Vrndavana. It appeared that Vrndavana had already become a site for the pastimes of the goddess of fortune.

Nanda Maharaja: Now that the birth ceremony of Krsna has been completed, I have decided to go to Mathura to pay the annual tax to the government of Kamsa. All of you, the able cowherd men of the village, should take great care of Vrndavana in my absence. (Nanda Maharaja leaves. Use music to indicate the passing of time.)

Narrator: When Nanda Maharaja arrived in Mathura, Vasudeva got the news and was very eager to congratulate his friend. He immediately went to the place where Nanda Maharaja was staying. When Vasudeva saw Nanda,

he felt that he had regained his life. Nanda, overwhelmed with joy, immediately stood up and embraced Vasudeva.

Vasudeva: Nanda! Ah! So good to see you! I have been struggling in the modes of Nature for so long but now I feel that I have regained my life!

Nanda Maharaja: Vasudeva! My good friend, come here! Let me embrace you!

(They embrace) Sit here! Be comfortable! You must tell me everything about our friends and relations in the big city!

Narrator: Vasudeva was received very warmly and offered a nice place to sit. At that time, Vasudeva was anxious about his two sons who had been put under the protection of Nanda without Nanda's knowledge. With great anxiety, Vasudeva inquired about Them. Both Balarama and Krsna were the sons of Vasudeva.

Balarama was transferred to the womb of Rohini, Vasudeva's own wife, but Rohini was kept under the protection of Nanda Maharaja. Krsna was personally delivered to Yasoda and exchanged with her daughter.

Nanda Maharaja knew that Balarama was the son of Vasudeva, although he did not know that Krsna was also Vasudeva's son. But, Vasudeva was aware of this fact and inquired very eagerly about Krsna and Balarama.

Vasudeva: My dear brother, you were old enough and very anxious to beget a son, and yet you had none. Now by the grace of the Lord you are fortunate to have a very nice son. I think that this incident is very auspicious for you.

Dear friend, I was imprisoned by Kamsa, and now I am released; therefore this is another birth for me. I had no hope of seeing you again, but by God's grace I can see you! This is a new birth for me!

Narrator: Vasudeva then expressed his anxiety about Krsna. Krsna was sent incognito to the bed of mother Yasoda, and after very pompously celebrating His birth ceremony, Nanda went to Mathura. He never expected that Krsna would live because all his other sons were killed by Kamsa.

Vasudeva: My dear friend, it is very difficult for us to live together. Although we have our family and relatives, sons and daughters, by nature's way we are generally separated from one another.

The reason for this is that every living entity appears on this earth under different pressures of fruitive activities; although they assemble together, there is no certainty of their remaining together for a long time.

According to one's fruitive activities, one has to act differently and thereby be separated. For example, many plants and creepers are floating on the waves of the ocean. Sometimes, they come together and sometimes they separate forever: one plant goes one way and another plant goes another. Similarly, our family assembly may be very nice while we are living

together, but after some time, in the course of the waves of time, we are separated.

Narrator: The purport of this expression by Vasudeva is this: although he had eight sons born in the womb of Devaki, unfortunately they were all gone. He could not even keep his one son Krsna with him. Vasudeva was feeling His separation, but he could not express the real fact.

Vasudeva: Please tell me about the welfare of Vrndavana. You have many animals—are they happy? Are they getting sufficient grass and water? Please also let me know whether the place where you are now living is undisturbed and peaceful.

Narrator: This inquiry was made by Vasudeva because he was very anxious about Krsna's safety. He knew that Kamsa and his followers were trying to kill Krsna by sending various kinds of demons. They had already resolved that all children born within ten days of the birthday of Krsna should be killed. Because Vasudeva was so anxious about Krsna, he inquired about the safety of His residence.

Vasudeva: And how is Balarama and His mother Rohini, who have been entrusted to your care, Nanda Maharaja? Balarama does not even know His real father. He knows you as His father. And now you have another child, Krsna, and I think you are taking very nice care for both of Them.

Narrator: It is also significant that Vasudeva inquired about the welfare of Nanda Maharaja's animals. The animals, and especially the cows, were protected exactly in the manner of one's children. Vasudeva was a ksatriya, and Nanda Maharaja was a vaisya. It is the duty of the ksatriya to give protection to the citizens of mankind, and it is the duty of the vaisyas to give protection to the cows. The cows are as important as the citizens. Just as the human citizens should be given all kinds of protection, so the cows also should be given full protection.

The maintenance of religious principles, economic development and the satisfactory execution of meeting the demands of the senses depend on cooperation among relatives, nations and all humanity. Therefore, it is everyone's duty to see that his fellow citizens and the cows are not put into difficulty. One should see to the peace and comfort of his fellow man and the animals. The development of religious principles, economic development and sense gratification can then be achieved without difficulty.

Vasudeva: I am very sorrowful due to not being able to give protection to my own sons born of Devaki. Therefore, I am thinking that religious principles, economic development and the satisfaction of the senses are all lost and will not be attained by me.

Nanda Maharaja: My dear Vasudeva, I know that you are very much aggrieved because the cruel king Kamsa has killed all your sons born of

Devaki. Although the last child was a daughter, Kamsa could not kill her, and she has entered into the celestial planets.

My dear friend, do not be aggrieved; we are all being controlled by our past unseen activities. Everyone is subjected to his past deeds, and one who is conversant with the philosophy of karma and its reaction is a man in knowledge. Such a person will not be aggrieved at any incident, happy or miserable.

Vasudeva: My dear Nanda, if you have already paid the government taxes, then return soon to your place, because I think that there may be some disturbances in Gokula. Kamsa cannot be trusted.

Narrator: After the friendly conversation between Nanda Maharaja and Vasudeva, Vasudeva returned to his home. The cowherd men headed by Nanda Maharaja, who had come to Mathura to pay their taxes, also returned.